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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
14 April 1966

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Political Situation in South Vietnam
(As of 10:00 A.M.)

1. A committee of the National Political Congress this morning issued a ten point communique calling for a constituent assembly to be elected within four months. It declared that a committee should be formed within ten days to work on an electoral law, and that the military government should resign as soon as the assembly is formed. The communique also urged an immediate cessation of current agitation, and amnesty for those who have been involved in antigovernment activity--especially in central Vietnam. Other clauses provided for the establishment of political parties, freedom of the press, national unity, and a democracy-building campaign. The communique represented areas of agreement reached by the delegates during the first two days of the Congress, but was not formalized by a vote.

2. Seven of the ten members of the military Directorate arrived at the Congress later in the morning. Chief of State General Thieu presented a signed declaration committing the government to the holding of elections within three to five months. He explained to the congress that the elections would be for a constituent assembly to draft a constitution for civilian government. Premier Ky then gave a short speech in which he noted that the Directorate's decree recognizing the organization of a constituent assembly is further proof that the military government is acting in the people's interests. He declared that he would support the implementation of this decree no matter what position he occupies in the

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future, but warned that there would be an uprising against even an elected government that could not insure victory over Communism. However, Ky indicated that it was up to the delegates to determine the type of provisional government that should preside until elections are held. The US Embassy has commented that this remark might cause some unnecessary difficulty for Ky, since the Congress itself had earlier indicated that the military government should continue in office until a constituent assembly has been elected.

3. The Congress was scheduled to meet again this afternoon to continue discussions. No reports have yet been received on this session.

4. The Buddhist response to this morning's developments is not yet certain, but a difference of opinion between militant and moderate factions may be developing. According to press sources, Buddhist Institute chairman Tam Chau attempted to turn today's demonstration into a "good will meeting" inside the grounds of the Buddhist Institute. He was reportedly supported by Ho Giac, a co-leader of the Buddhist "struggle committee." However, the size of the crowd--some 20,000--and its expectations of a demonstration reportedly compelled the monks to lead a "victory march." There have been no official reports on the demonstration thus far, although press reports describe it as orderly.

5. Other more militant Buddhist leaders--including Thien Minh and Tri Quang--have not yet firmly revealed their response to the announcements of the Congress and the military government today. Although these two declarations apparently satisfy earlier Buddhist demands, the prospect of the Ky regime remaining as a provisional government has also been opposed by Minh and Quang. Thien Minh has previously stated that he does not trust the Ky government, and one press source today quoted him as saying that "the struggle will continue." Tri Quang, a leader of the antigovernment movement in I Corps, yesterday told US observers that a provisional government headed by Tran Van Don would be "ideal" for several reasons.

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6. In addition, the US Embassy has reported that Professor Tran Quang Thuan, a leading Buddhist layman who attended the Congress for the first time today, declared this morning that the Ky government could not be trusted. He proposed that an assembly be convened which would function as a provisional government until elections were held. Thuan indicated that military representatives--including Ky and Thieu--should participate in this assembly. Although Thuan claimed that he was acting only as an individual, the US Embassy has commented that Thuan--who is a member of the Buddhist "struggle group"--was clearly speaking with the authority of the Buddhist Institute.

7. Elsewhere, the VNQDD (Nationalist) Party demonstration took place today in Hue as scheduled. Some 1,000 persons reportedly marched past the US consulate with banners expressing appreciation for US assistance against the Viet Cong. There have been no reports of any conflict between the demonstrators and antigovernment elements in the city.

8. US observers in Da Nang have reported that the municipal radio there is no longer operable. However, antigovernment broadcasts are continuing on low power from military equipment located in the quarters of the Da Nang military garrison commander.

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14 April 1966

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Political Situation in South Vietnam
(As of 2:30 P.M.)

1. Late press reports indicate that preliminary reaction of the Struggle Committee of the "Buddhist Forces" to decrees issued at this morning's meeting of the National Political Congress are favorable. Thich Ho Giac reportedly said that the main Buddhist demands have been met and that they "are satisfied at this point." Thich Thien Minh is reported to have said that Prime Minister Ky must now announce cabinet (sic) changes if he expects support. There is no other reporting on reactions to Chief of State Thieu's call for an elected constituent assembly in three to five months.

2. The afternoon session of the National Political Congress opened with fewer members in attendance than this morning and closed without any conclusive action being taken. Delegates discussed the formation of a body to supervise elections and voted that it should include GVN representatives and should restrict its activities to elections. Delegates also discussed the problem of an interim government until the assembly is elected, and, although the subject was not brought to a vote, the majority of the delegates who spoke favored retention of the Ky government. Provincial and municipal delegates (the 39 of 48 who attended) are expected to meet tomorrow for further discussions. The other delegates are apparently going home.

3. The province chief of Quang Tin (in I Corps), submitted his resignation today, citing

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as the reason that he was certain of conflict between struggle group demonstrators and armed nationalist (VNQDD) party forces, presumably in his province capital. There had been rumors of probable clashes today from outside agitators coming to the town, but nothing materialized.

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